



Technical Committee Meeting Notice

February 10, 2009
8:30 a.m.

PACTS, 68 Marginal Way, Portland

Agenda

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Minutes of January 13th, 2009 Meeting**
- 4. Collector Ranking Revisions**
- 5. Economic Stimulus Projects**
- 6. Collector Study Update Information and Presentation(s)**
- 7. Information, Planning and Transit Updates and Other Business**
- 8. Adjourn.**

Next Meeting: March 10, 2009

The Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Portland Urbanized Area

68 Marginal Way • Portland, Maine 04101

Telephone: (207) 774-9891 • Fax: (207) 774-7149 • www.pactsplan.org

PACTS Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2009 – 8:30 a.m.

Members Present: Jennie Franceschi, Biddeford, Chair; Angela Blanchette, Saco; Bob Burns, Gorham; Jim Carmody, Portland; Sara Devlin, Maine Turnpike Authority; Bob Hough, MaineDOT; Dan Jellis, Yarmouth; Mike Laberge, MaineDOT; Jeff McEwen; FHWA; Al Presgraves, Freeport; Dave Redlefsen, Public Transit; Jim Wendel, Scarborough.

Absent: Dana Anderson, So. Portland; Norm Baker, MaineDOT; Mike Bolduc, Saco; Don Chaisson, No. Yarmouth; Mary Ann Conroy, Old Orchard Beach; Julia Dawson, SMRPC; Eric Dudley, Westbrook; Doug Fortier, Windham; Bob Malley, Cape Elizabeth; Dale Mitchell, Policy Committee Appointee; Anna Price, FHWA; Steve Linnell, GPCOG. Skip Varney, Falmouth.

Staff and Guests: Carl Eppich, PACTS; John Duncan, PACTS; LaRay Hamilton, MDOT; Sue McIntyre, GPCOG; Paul Niehoff, PACTS;

1. **Call to Order** Jennie Franceschi, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.
2. **Public Comment:** There were no public comments expressed.
3. **Adoption of minutes of December 9th, 2008 meeting:**
Dan Jellis made a motion for approval of the December 9th, 2008 minutes, seconded by Jim Wendel. Vote taken. All were in favor. Minutes were unanimously accepted.
4. **TIP Set-Aside Discussion:**
John provided an update on the review work being done on the TIP Process. Much of the discussions will be ongoing and will focus on whether or not the PACTS' set-a-sides policy should be revised. One idea that is being considered is whether the PACTS Technical Committee should be providing some input and recommendation(s) to the TIP Process Committee.

John directed the group to Agenda Item 4 in the meeting packet and spoke of the topics that were introduced by staff at the TIP Process Committee's first meeting. He also provided a brief overview of the existing policy language as it relates to the Set Aside Policy and then referred to staff's proposals and comments as described in the meeting packet.

Paul spoke of staff's reasoning for a 0% funding allocation on simple collector paving projects. Staff believes that more simple paving projects could be done if towns would do their own. This would leave monies available for roads that need substantial work. When the PACTS Technical Committee recommended that \$5 million be spent on simple paving projects there was no discussion at the time as to what to do with roads at the bottom of the list. It was felt that since we are going through a review of the TIP Process that there should be discussion about these projects unless some towns have plans to do those. The Technical Committee may want to give recommendation to the TIP Process Committee on this topic. Discussion continued. *A summary of opinions and comments expressed in the discussions are as follows.*

- Gorrill-Palmer's report noted that if monies were shifted and not necessarily "taken away", then more monies could be used to increase the "rebuild category".
- Support was expressed for the historical approach listed in the meeting packet because the amount is susceptible to change every year and that these could be viewed as guidelines.
- One opinion opposed decreasing monies for collectors and favored at least keeping the same amount. It was said that towns cannot afford to pave the collectors for lack of funding and an increase in property taxes would be unattainable due to current economic conditions.
- Gorrill-Palmer's report showed a lack in funds for the simple preservation of roads.
- There is a fundamental quandary of demand vs. monies
- As the PACTS Technical Committee moves forward more data will be made available to substantiate whether or not it is less expensive for towns to do their own simple collector

paving projects. More data and information is needed for a better informed discussion to take place on this topic.

- There is not enough money to do everything and everyone wants everything done. Decisions have to be made. The sooner priorities are set, the better.
- Diverting money away from maintaining roads and shifting it to widening roads might not be the best way. However, another opinion was expressed saying that it might be worthwhile for towns to spend more monies out of their local funds. Then more PACTS monies could go towards road widening projects, etc.
- How do we improve the LAP process in conjunction with the maintenance of our collector roads?
- Legislative action may be needed with regards to current LAP standards and procedures.
- It was noted that changes are in the works with regards to the LAP process and specs. The FHWA has also been looking to provide more leeway and a common sense approach to the LAP process. There have been ongoing discussions about paving specs, testing, and visual inspections.
- There is a certain amount of risk involved for the town if it does its own simple collector road paving.
- Arterials that meet DOT standards will be paved by the DOT as appropriate. The MPOs are responsible for the reconstruction of an arterial. Once rebuilt, the DOT will go in, maintain, and preserve that investment.
Traditionally, the rebuild and widening category has been going into the big ticket projects before MDOT goes in and maintains those arterials.
- Maybe we should take a regional look and then measure the need for rebuilding arterials.
- A certain amount of monies must be spent on roads that are on the National Highway System (NHS).
- A concern was expressed about the increase in allocation for intersections. However, it was noted that this is because we currently have a \$2 million commitment to the Dunstan Corner project in Scarborough.
- Our allocation process is very urban funded vs. being spread out throughout the region. Maybe we could get back to some of the rehabilitation.
- A suggestion was expressed to continue funding for widening of roads and the improvement of intersections but not at the expense of collectors. Keep and improve transit and bike/ped categories and shift numbers around on the widening and rebuild categories.
- We know what the needs are and what they should be in the next B-TIP. Should we preemptively look at the proposed need in the next B-TIP instead of allocating a certain percentage?
- The Gorrill-Palmer Report provides a list of collector road names and indicates which have been overlaid.
- Staff research will be done on roundabouts in conjunction with improving intersections.
- The Gorrill-Palmer Report was condensed into a brochure and has been handed out to those in the Legislature in hopes that they will realize the dire need for more funding allocations. Reconstruction of roads would require about \$20 million a biennium alone.
- MaineDOT 's strategy is to preserve the State's arterials first. They are also making the same tough decisions when it comes to reconstruction of roads, due to the current economic conditions.
- If road overlays are not done, the costs would go up expeditiously.
- There was a consensus that we need to maintain what we have and that the towns do not have enough funding to maintain the roads that they need to do.
- Everything is on the table for discussion. Whether we think regionally, bigger projects, etc. This is a good time to have this discussion.
- The group was encouraged to lobby for more funding whenever possible.
- The two main sources of federal funding for transportation are the highway tolls and the tax per gallon. Local transportation funding is from the excise tax.

- There may be a need to “think out of the box” in regards to transportation infrastructure. We may need to look at our various land uses and may have to consider the reduction of some of our infrastructure. Stop promoting higher density. This is a good topic for further discussion among planning committees.
- The group was reminded that many subdivisions are privately paved and are owned by associations who maintain their own roads.

5. **Economic Stimulus Projects**

Paul provided an update on the status of the Economic Stimulus Projects. Everything is in a “holding pattern” as far as what the MPO needs to do next. No one knows how much monies we are going to receive. Many different terms such as “shovel-ready” and “off the shelf” are being used. PACTS has a list of a varying number of projects. However, many of the projects on the lists do not meet the requirements indicated by MDOT. At the moment there are only three projects that meet the perimeters mentioned; the Route 100/26 project; the Falmouth Road project, and, the Route 112 project. If these three are submitted, they are not in the PACTS funding region. Two of them are in the MPO while the Route 112 project goes outside the MPO.

No additional information on the stimulus package is available. We have been given a very short timeframe to submit projects. Projects from a number of other varied groups, including towns, have already been submitted. Some of these projects are already within the MPO. Mike Laberge mentioned that MDOT’s list is continually changing. He suggested that in terms of “triage” it might be a good idea for PACTS to narrow down fifty plus projects that are realistic. Much will depend on what kind of economic stimulus package is passed and what the rules and guidelines are going to be for the submission of projects. MDOT is having a meeting next Friday on this topic. Mike will keep the group posted as more information becomes available.

6. **Collector Ranking Categories**

This item was tabled until next PACTS Technical Committee meeting.

7. **Information, Planning and Transit Updates and Other Business**

1. ***A Planning Committee update was provided by Mike Laberge.*** Discussions have been taking place on transit-oriented development. Policymakers in the legislature are trying to craft a bill to amend the TIF law to give towns incentives to do transit-oriented projects.
2. ***Carl provided an update on the Transit Committee’s efforts.*** The Transit Committee has been meeting with the Planning Committee. The two groups have been thinking regionally about expanding and/or influencing land use, extending transit and have been discussing the type of transportation modes needed. He directed the group to the maps on the wall that reflected their efforts. They have looked at existing transit routes, density, and what has been done and what can be done. Carl referred to the 2003 Destination Tomorrow and noted that it had been a huge effort for the Policy Committee. The policy had been adopted but not the guidelines. The effort is to do it more pro-actively. It affects infrastructure and payment. Carl spoke of expanding other modes of transportation such as bikes, walking, bus and transit. How do we get people around without the use of cars? How do we preserve these roads? Suggestions have included having a meeting with the Technical Committee. This could be a cohesive goal and direction. The updated Destination Tomorrow 3.0 will be “borne” this coming year.

Dave Redlefsen announced that Tom Meyers has confirmed that MaineDOT does not have a ready to go contract with regard to piggy-backing. A “piggy-back” would shorten the procurement process. There is much confusion with the Maine Bureau of Process and Procurement with regards to what qualifies a State to State “piggy-back” contract. Dave pointed out that there are many towns throughout the country that have “piggy-back” contracts. As many as three sets of specs have been submitted to MaineDOT that have not been acted upon. As of today, Dave noted that METRO is pulling out of the potential contract with the State of Florida. They may instead negotiate directly on their own and bypass MaineDOT

completely. They need buses. They are in for 18 buses right now. He spoke of a recent trip to New York just recently and was told that New York is using bridge and toll money to fund their buses. They are very pro-transit and do not rely on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to fund their buses. They only use FTA funding for capital overhaul projects. When METRO tried to work with Palm Tran in Florida for their buses, they were turned down through the FTA because there was another transit agency in Florida that needed the buses. With current economic conditions being what they are throughout the country, whatever buses that are used for disposal are now kept for later use.

Dave pointed out that the METRO has been waiting for four years for buses. Current METRO buses are seven years over their useful life. They should have been replaced back in 2002. Dave does not understand why this was not done. The lack of funding could have been a reason that prevented their replacement. In the last month or so there has been a commitment by the MaineDOT to have a plan in place to address these issues. They are not going to rely on federal earmarks. Dave said that he would like to see one vehicle specification for all the needs of the State of Maine's transit industry. That way, everyone would be working with the same specifications.

Dave sadly announced that METRO will not be going forward with compressed natural gas buses because there is no statewide support at the moment for CNG. All current METRO procurements are for diesel.

3. ***Gorrill-Palmer has completed the final Collector Road Report*** and has summarized their findings into a tri-fold brochure. (Copies were distributed among the group). Complete reports are also now available for each individual town. The final report will be presented at the next Policy Committee meeting and the next TIP Process Committee meeting. An electronic copy of the report should become available in the near future.
It was asked if this could be uploaded to the PACTS website at some time. There had additionally been some talk of producing a manual for towns as a result of this analysis approach. Paul pointed out that many of the methods are currently available at the community level.
 4. ***More information on the TIP Process Update*** from the January 9th meeting was deferred to the next meeting.
 5. John Duncan said that PACTS in Bangor is interested in hiring John Melrose to do an analysis on whether the State's Urban Compact are as fair to Urban Compact areas as it should be.
 6. ***A three-party agreement between the MPO, the City and State***, will be formed with MPO projects as soon as approved and tested.
 7. ***Staff will be sending an email out to all members of PACTS Committees*** to submit proposals for new studies. These will be due by February 20th, 2009.
 8. In answer to a question on any forecasts pertaining to ***the cost of asphalt for 2009***, Mike replied that he didn't have an answer at the moment but would follow-up on it.
8. **Adjourn**
The meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Agenda Item 4. Collector Ranking Categories

Excerpt from a recent email: "...eliminating the proposed scoring weights assigned for traffic, truck and transit utilization. (Perhaps it is more marketable to say that this would remove a smidge of unintended urban bias?) We should keep the collector paving allocation determinations based on road conditions only as represented by the PCR with the added Deflectometer [FWD] scores.

G-P and the Tech Committee spent a fair amount of time on the rankings formula, so should we adhere to the current formula or should we revisit it as noted above?

Agenda Item 5. Economic Stimulus Projects

Update on the status of the stimulus situation. The MaineDOT list of potential stimulus projects can be found at <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/index.php> .

The list includes existing projects currently included in the STIP. The reasoning behind this as we understand is two fold; **1.** Some of these projects may have been deferred based on the current financial situation at the state level and **2.** They are projects that are ready to move forward immediately. Also, DOT wants to move projects quickly in hopes that additional funding could come Maine's way if other states cannot move their projects quickly enough.

Another caveat; as we understand, currently funded PACTS projects that may receive stimulus funding will be funded at 100% for CE and construction with no local match required. Projects on the list that have PE and RW monies spent will still require a match for those items.

Agenda Item 6. Collector Study Update Information

As you may recall during our development of the Collector Road Assessment we all agreed on the importance of consistently updating the data set with new detailed information. Gorrill Palmer is working on data sheets that we will use to collect data and update not only the database but the GIS shape files as well.

At the next TIP Process Committee meeting on Friday the 13th G-P will be presenting an overview of the study and will be prepared to answer questions related to project scope needs and suggestions on how to "balance" the program needs.

At the next Policy Committee meeting on March 26, G-P will also present the report findings. We are **STRONGLY** suggesting as many tech members attend as possible and would like a commitment from a number of members to attend. It's important to be able to explain the reasons behind the report and to discuss how we will use the report to improve and maintain our system.

Agenda Item 7. Information, Planning and Transit Updates and Other Business

1. Planning Committee Update.
2. Transit Committee Update.
3. TIP Process Update from the January 9th meeting (again?).
4. New DOT policy of submitting project cost estimates for town commitment prior to drafting city/state agreements.
5. Important note: Submit Study proposals for UPWP by February 20th.
6. On going are numerous scope, length, and finance modifications to the 08/09 TIP.
7. Other items